

GENDER ROLES IN KOREA

Kim, Tae-lyon

Ewha Womens University Seoul. Korea

I. Introduction

The Korean peninsula, located in North-eastern Asia, is bordered on the north by China and gazes at Japan to the East. The country was divided into south and north by the Demilitarized Zone at roughly the 38th parallel. The land area of South Korea is 38,276 square miles and its population is 42 million. Korea experiences four distinct seasons, with an average temperature of 60 degrees fahrenheit.

Koreans and other Asian people share smimilar characteristics such as physical appearances. However, Koreans remain independent and distinctive in their culture, language, clothing and cuisine. The Korean language is regarded as a member of the Altaic family, which includes such tongues as Manchurian and Mongolian. Although Korean has no linguistic relationship with Chinese, centuries of close contact with China has

resulted in the absorption of a large number of Chinese characters into Korean.

II. An Overview

From ancient times to modern society, gender roles have been characterized by a uniform emphasis on biological differences. This focus continues to provide an easy justification for a dichotomous conception of gender roles. In particular, traditional oriental philosophy has at its root, a system of cosmic forces which recognize man as positive, valuable, strong, active, and as provider of life resources and woman as negative, valueless, weak, passive and as recipient of life resources. Traditional Korean society has adopted this delineation of gender roles, thereby placing women in subordinate and inferior positions to their male counterparts.

This philosophical baseline has greatly

contributed to constructing and maintaining a fixed conception of gender roles and has shaped individual self-identification. Korean society, influenced by Confucianism for over one thousand years, applies several restrictions on women's behavior, i.e., physical and psychological segregation of women from men, mandatory subservience of women, confinement of women to their homes, and rejection of women in social activities. Under the principles of Confucian ideology, women were to observe the virtues of three submissions: to submit to their fathers, their husbands, and their sons.

These traditional concepts of gender roles as perceived by Korean people appeared to be influenced by the "so-called" modernization period of Japanese occupation of Korea. However, Japan, the colonizing country, also viewed gender roles in a stratified manner. Its own struggles with new and changing definitions of gender roles impaired its ability to effectively advance Korea's modernization.

Further, in 1948, Korea became independent under the name of the Republic of Korea and adopted a constitution which declared such liberal democratic ideals as separation of powers, equality before the law, and guarantees of fundamental human rights. In 1950, the Korean War began and left in its wake, a society deprived of the opportunities to practice the declarations of equality and human rights of the 1948 constitution. Rather, of prime concern to the war-torn Korea citizenry, were issues of

survival through rebuilding and redeveloping their country. Korea's current economic success remains a legacy of the intense focus placed on efficiency and production.

Amidst this environment of "reconstruction", the issue of gender roles, in the context of social equality, has remained safely shielded behind economical or political debates such as the resolutions of labor troubles or the potential threats of communism. Various autocratic governments further perpetuated the maintenance of dichotomous conceptions of gender roles by ignoring and subverting issues of human rights and equality.

Continuous efforts to improve women's legal and social positions persist despite historical obstacles. Clearly, people in contemporary Korea are experiencing changes in attitude and perceptions of gender roles.

III. Comparisons of Life-cycles Between the Gender Roles of Men and Women

A. Infancy and Early Childhood

1. Preference for Sons

Traditionally, the principles of Confucian ideology served as the primary influence on the behavior and customs of the Korean family. The male-oriented teachings of Confucianism stresses the patriarchal role of men, the importance

of family lineage, and the significance of paying homage to ancestors. As such, men predominate over women and sons are preferred over daughters. That is, the patriarchal family system places premium on male roles in customs, such as, worshipping ancestors, parents' dependence on their sons, male leadership in family rituals, male superiority in economic matters, male adeptness in social situations, and finally, the dominant belief that men "adopt" their wives into their families after marriage. In sum, traditional Korean families prefer sons, believing that only sons can continue the family lineage and that sons have the duty of caring for their parents.

Today, the significance of sons has diminished, largely due to increasing numbers of people who are educated, experienced in cultural exchanges, and aware of different values. Still, however, Koreans generally prefer sons over daughters. When a mother gives birth to a son, she feels relief, pride and joy because she believes she has fulfilled one of her fundamental duties to her parents-in-law. When a daughter is born, the mother usually feels disappointed and consoles herself with the thought that her daughter can be helpful to her. Nevertheless, many mothers hope for sons the next time, or continue to give birth until they bear sons.

Such a preference for sons results in the high baby-boy/baby-girl ratio of 117 to 100, considerably higher than the world average of

103 to 100 (WHO) (KWDI, 1989). Many Korean parents today, try to limit the number of children they have to one or two, and wish for at least one son. To that end, many pregnant women consult with specialists to ascertain the sex of the embryo. This practice has led to an increasing number of abortions and ultimately, sexual imbalance in the structure of the population. In response to this problem, the Korean Ministry of Health and Social Affairs recently enacted a law, prohibiting doctors from conducting gender tests before the actual delivery of the child.

Throughout Korean history, the preference for sons has been widely accepted. Still predominant in contemporary Korean society, this preference has had the adverse effect of producing a sexually imbalanced generation, as evidenced in the male/female ratio of young children. This phenomenon raises serious concern about the destruction of sexual balance naturally maintained in human ecology.

2. Different child-rearing practices for boys and girls

The development of child behavior and personality evolves within the basic family unit. Parents have the greatest influence on their children's thinking and behavior. Korean parents who demonstrate a strong preference for sons have attitudes and expectations of their sons, distinct from those of their daughters. Depending on the sex of the child, different

colors and shapes in clothes, blankets, toys and interior design are selected. The colors selected for daughters, for example, are mainly in the order of pinks or reds, while those selected for boys are generally blue or brown tones. Korean parents appear to nurture the emotional development of daughters and to cultivate the intellectual development of sons.

As different colors and shapes are selected for children of opposite sexes, toys are similarly discriminated according to sex. Cars, toy guns and sporting goods are chosen for boys, while musical instruments, dolls and play kitchenware given to girls. Boys play with building blocks or with toy cars which develops their sense of space and analytical skills, with toy guns which enhances aggressive and independent characters, or with machine parts which cultivates intellectual capabilities. In contrast, girls play with musical instruments, dance, play with dolls, or play house through which they can develop emotional capabilities(Lee, 1989). Accordingly, 95% of young girls have dolls, while the same percentage of young boys are prohibited from playing with dolls(Lee, 1989). Such differences in selecting toys, based on a child's sex, reflects parents' differing attitudes regarding gender.

Finally, differences as a function of gender are noted in the use of words. "Strong" and "courageous" are considered "masculine" and thus, used to describe boys. Girls, on the other hand, are expected to be "kind" and

"submissive" to the "feminine." Therefore, unlike for girls who are socialized to be passive and dependent, restrictions are rarely imposed on boys who are raised to be active and independent. As such, Korean girls experience different patterns of socialization than their "brothers" by parents with predetermined ideas about gender roles and deep-rooted preferences for sons.

B. School Years

1. Siblings and chores at home

Birth order affects the quantity and quality of interaction between Korean parents and their children. Korean parents have expect more of their first-born children. First-borns are expected to excel in academic achievement and extra-curricular activities. As influenced by Confucianist teachings, this fact is especially true for first-born sons who therefore, tend to become more "gender stereotyped" than other children. First-born sons are likely to be more "masculine" than their brothers(Choi, 1983).

Typically, responsibilities in Korean households are divided by gender. Men are expected to be the financial supporter, while women tend to the housekeeper. Surveys among Korean teenagers suggest differences in attitudes about gender roles(Lee, 1983). Lee listed fifteen household chores. Among them, garbage disposal, farmwork, and carrying heavy loads— which are regarded as men's

work— were carried out by male students, while few responded affirmatively to participating in cooking, laundering, washing dishes, grocery shopping or baby-sitting— chores frequently done by female students. Both male and female students consider household chores the obligation of women rather than of men. Among the fifteen household chores listed by Lee, most male students place eleven chores, including the five described above, in the category of “women’s work.” Similarly, most female students regarded ten of Lee’s chores, including the above five, “women’s work.”

2. Opportunities for education

The Korean constitution stipulates that all people, regardless of sex, age or social status, shall have equal opportunity of education. Accordingly, elementary school attendance is compulsory for both boys and girls. More than 95% of Korean students— both boys and girls — attend elementary school (Ministry of Education, 1990).

As the level of education increases, however, differences based on gender become evident. In 1960, for example, the ratio of boys to girls in Korean high schools was 72 to 28. Significant increases are noted for both sexes, i.e., by 1990, boys constituted 83.3% of the high school population, a twelve-fold increase and girls made up 69.3%, twenty-six times larger than in 1960. However, a striking gap between the sexes continues.

Male students outnumber female students by a rate of 71 to 29 by the time they reach college. Female college students constitute less than 1/3 the entire college-attending population. Further, the percentage of women ultimately receiving university degrees is considerably smaller than that of their male counterparts. The percentage of men achieving a Bachelor of Arts degree is 37.58%, While women trail behind at 21.11%. Similarly for a Masters of Arts degree, 6.74% of the graduates are men and 1.53% are women and for a doctorate, 0.581% are men and 0.068% women (Ministry of Education, 1990), Clearly, the disparity of attendance between men and women increases with the level of education.

3. Gender preferences for topic-area in school and for disciplines in college and university

In general, the school environment dictates the different roles expected of both sexes. The structure of the school itself, invites adherence to basic gender distinctions. In Korean elementary schools, for instance, most teachers are women, while the school principals, with few exceptions, are men. Moreover, the small number of male teachers take dominant roles in major projects at school. Daily performances and activities are also divided depending to sex.

Korean schools contribute to pre-existing definitions of gender roles in two specific areas:

1. different curricula are maintained for male

students and for female students and 2. teachers manifest different expectations on their students based on sex.

Curriculum for female students attempts to foster certain "feminine" traits, e.g., warm-heartedness, kindness and generosity. In contrast, male students' curriculum targets characteristics such as sincerity, diligence, creativity, strength, and progressiveness. For example, female students in middle school must take mandatory courses in home-making and vocational training, including lessons on woman as consumer and as child-bearer. Male students must take compulsory courses in technological training which prepare them for future production and management positions in society.

A study on perception of gender differences of junior high and high school students suggests varying preferences for certain subjects depending on sex (Sae Hwa Chung, 1989). According to the study, male students generally prefer mathematics, science, physical education and manual training while female students prefer language, English, music and home economics. What this study points to is that although the overall aggregate number of students rose in the past decade, education at school continues to stress traditional gender roles.

Similar conclusions can be made about different preferences for certain majors between male and female university students

(KWDI, 1989). Typically, the majors chosen by male students are in the order of engineering (heading the list), social science, language, literature, and education. Comparatively, female students constitute 66.0% of all art majors, 56.7% of those majoring in education, a mere 3.4% of engineer students, and 4.9% of majors in marine and fisheries (KWDI, 1989). These figures suggest that deep-rooted perceptions of gender role division remains firmly imbedded in the female student's psyche.

C. Young Adulthood

1. Socialization and dating practices

Industrialization in Korea resulted in mass migration of young people from suburban and rural areas into the cities. In the process of adjusting to modern society which rewards efficiency and individual performances, young Koreans came to espouse the spirit of equality and individualism, ultimately leading to changing views about marriage. Whereas traditional Korean society emphasized the continuation of family lineage and prosperity to the family, contemporary society stresses the significance of marriage to a spouse to fulfill individual happiness.

Not uncommon in the past, first meeting one's spouse to be at the wedding ceremony is no longer practiced in modern marriages. Naturally, "dating" has become an important part of life for Korean young adults. Also

noteworthy is the different significance of "dating", as a result of relatively rapid social changes. In the past, simply going out once or twice was acceptable, leading ultimately to frequent meetings where young Koreans are encouraged to marry. Discrimination as a function of sex and male-oriented conceptions of sex, however, remain solidly ingrained in Korean society. When asked their opinions about premarital sex between men and women, Korean women generally accepted their fiances' premarital sexual experiences, while most men expressed a strong dislike for their future wives' sexual experiences (KWDI, 1989). In sum, "dating" or merely having meetings with the opposite sex is widely accepted by Korean society, but women's premarital sexual experiences are harshly criticized by men and at times, by other women.

2. Career opportunities

Women are further discriminated against because of their gender in the job market. Attitudes toward women who work vary according to sex of the respondent. A Korean Women's Development Institute study posited the question, "What do you think of women having jobs?" While 83.5% responded positively to the question, more than 15% reacted negatively (KWDI, 1989). By sex, 91.6% of the female respondents answered that women should have their own jobs while a significantly lower percentage of men felt that women should

not work. This KWDI study shows Korean men's relatively conservative nature concerning working women.

When KWDI asked, "Why do you want to work?", 48.2% of the women respondents cited "to earn money" as their primary reason, while 25.9% answered "to have my own work" and 24.7% responded, "to develop as a human being" as other reasons. Most of the women who worked out of financial necessity said they would quit working as soon as they could achieve economic stability. Other women with careers, working for reasons other than necessity, said they would continue to work beyond stability (35.1%), while 13.1% of these women said they would work "until they got married." These figures suggest that many Korean women still do not understand the concept of having "lifelong jobs" or permanent careers.

In professional and administrative positions, men outnumber women by a rate of 72.6 to 27.4. In recent years, the percentage of women in the total work force increased to 4.2%, but this figure remains modest compared to the total number of working men. Further, most of the women in the contemporary work force participate primarily in industries such as agriculture, forestry and fishery, rather than in professional or "white collar" positions.

Scholastically, working women continue to stagger behind their male counterparts. Most working women are elementary school

graduates and have not pursued higher academic degrees. In fact, studies show that the academic degree achieved by women inversely relates to the size of women in the work force. Simply put, that women are receiving higher levels of education in increasing numbers does not necessarily translate into a growing population of working women. The male population in the work force, in contrast, is characterized by an even distribution of education levels. The low employment rate among highly educated women indicates that women do not generally make significant contributions to economic activities commensurate with their academic background. This fact suggests that women do not have equal access to professional and “white collar” positions.

D. Adulthood

1. Marriage arrangement and weddings

Generally, adult self-identification depends on getting married, starting a family, and gaining status in one’s profession. These processes are related to social interrelations with different roles according to sex. That is, women identify themselves in their roles as mother and wife, while men relate to their function as breadwinners for their families.

In Korea, marriage is considered a “developmental stage” that everyone should experience. For men, the “proper age” for

marriage is between the ages of 26 and 27, their expected age after graduation from university and compulsory participation in the military. Women “should” get married by the age of 23 or 24 upon graduation from college.

According to a KWDI study, the factors for determining spouses can be classified in four categories: (1) Parental Arrangement, i.e., parents choose their children’s spouses, (2) Parental Introduction, i.e., parents or outside parties recommend a spouse and allow the children the final decision, (3) Parental Consent, i.e., children choose their own partners and parents either approve or disapprove, and (4) Child Autonomy, i.e., children choose their spouses without any parental intervention.

The manifestation of these four factors depends significantly on the socio-economic circumstances. For example, in families of middle to high income, Parental Introduction of the spouses-to-be is most frequently practiced. In contrast, Parental Consent of children’s marriage is widely used among working class families. In all, Child Autonomy in marriage is rarely practiced in Korea.

In general, the use and popularity of each of the practices listed above change with generations. Among housewives who are over 46 years old, more than half (54.9%) were married through Parental arrangement. Of the marriages among young adults now, 37.8% are allowed through Parental Consent, while the percentage of arranged marriages has

decreased to 30.9%. Evidently, the factors important to spouse selection in Korea have shifted away from arranged marriages and toward marriages of love.

While older generations stress social and economic status, i.e., family and academic background, people of the younger generation express more interest in marriage as a harmony of both emotion and personality and of similar preferences and hobbies. Unlike in the past, middle class young adults are now selecting their spouses by focusing on the person him/herself, rather than on his/her family background.

Customarily, Korean brides are to present gifts to her bridegrooms's family and relatives. Another form of honsu requires the bride to purchase appliances and furniture for her new family home. Honsu emerges as an important social problem due to the increasing number of women who are forced by their in-laws to divorce because they could not provide enough honsu.

2. Household duties, marriage and divorce

Koreans generally believe that housework is too trivial to be performed by men. Most men who do housework are disdained and ridiculed. Rather, housework, considered unimportant and worthless, remains the responsibility of women. Regardless of whether she works outside the home, women are expected to single handedly care for her family's home. Husbands rarely

share the burden.

According to a study surveying 235 working women and 265 non-working women in Seoul, not one woman reported that her husband helped with cooking, washing clothes, or ironing (KWDI, 1986). Working wives can generally get outside help, i.e., a maid, to complete the housework. In low income families, however, working wives must do the "menial work" in both the work place and at home. In short, sex-stereotyping pervades Korean households regarding individual duties and responsibilities. Women are strictly responsible for housework.

Adherence to these rigid roles may contribute to marital problems. According to a survey of 300 housewives married for less than five years, however, marital problems stemmed from trouble with in-laws, economic difficulties, personality differences and communication problems. Most frequently, lack of communication between husband and wife caused the most conflict. The Seoul Central Office for Family Advice points as the causes leading to divorce, extramarital affairs (27.9%), problems related to children (14.8%), personality differences (11.9%), conflict between mother in-law and daughter-in-law and physical abuse by the husband (8.4%)

By Korean law, fathers reserve all rights and obligations over their children in the case of divorce. Fathers, not mothers, are awarded custody of their children. Many Korean mothers, who fear losing their children and who

do not have their own financial resources, do not consider divorce and instead, remain unhappily married. However, recent action has been taken to reduce the extent of paternal rights. Such changes promise increasing divorce rates and more active participation of women in home economics.

The current wave of change in Korean society brings with it new conceptions of gender roles. Amidst these changes, deep-rooted traditional values persist that cause great confusion for women as mothers, wives, or professionals. Those who devote themselves to caring for their families feel frustration at their lack of self development, while many career women feel trapped between traditional gender roles and changing conceptions of women. In reality, the percentage of women who experience the latter, i.e., those middle-age professional women, remains relatively small.

E. Old Age

1. Status in the community

As with other countries with increasing standards of living and progressive development of medicine, Korea is experiencing lower mortality rates, longer life-spans, and thus, a growing population of elderly people. Korea's population of senior citizens (over 60 years old) has increased from 3.4% in 1960 to 3.9% in 1980 to finally, 4.5% in 1990. By the year 2000, the increase is expected to reach 6.0% (Rhee,

1990).

The philosophy of Confucianism has traditionally been the primary influence on Korean behavior and customs. Under the teachings of Confucianism, filial obligation is esteemed the basic code of conduct and the most important moral principle. Hierarchical order valued under Confucianist thought transcends parent/child relationship to general society requiring the young to respect, honor and obey the old.

In the traditional Korean family, the oldest member typically had the authority to decide on family matters. In contemporary society, however, this power has shifted from the elderly to the nuclear family in general. The advent of modern technology and science has further undermined the elderly's power of experience and wisdom. Elderly men in particular, have lost their position as the center of power. Elderly women in contrast, continue to exert influence in the realm of housework, albeit to a lesser degree.

2. Living Arrangement

The social policy for the welfare of senior citizens has not fully developed in Korean society. This shortfall can be attributed to an unprecedented growth in the population (due to the improving standards of living and medical technologies) and to the teachings of Confucianism that places responsibility of the elderly within the confines of the family over

society. According to a sample survey conducted by the Korean Gallup Poll (1983), 96 % of Korean senior citizens live with their family.

According to Cho (1990), elderly men outwork their female counterparts by a rate of 30% to 9.6%, respectively. They participate actively in agriculture and fishery sectors (44 %) and in the management of small businesses. A mere 1.9% work as technicians, white collar professionals, or administrators – areas necessary for industrial growth.

Differences can also be noted between the employment rate of the elderly residing in cities and the elderly in rural communities. In Korean cities, senior citizens constitute a small 5.4% of the work force, while 42.3% of the work in rural areas is done by the senior citizens of the community. This disparity suggests a shortage of jobs for the elderly in big cities.

Cho's report concludes with the elderly's general concerns with health problems which relates directly to their satisfaction with their lives. More than half (55%) of the elderly women interviewed believed they were not healthy. Elderly men similarly had little faith in their health (46%). In general, the older this population becomes, the more apt they are to believe they are unhealthy.

3. Dependency

Differences between men and women can be found in the intensity of dependence.

Traditionally, women have depended on men in nearly every respect. As such, a spouse's death has been much more stressful and painful for women than for men. After their husband's deaths, older women experience financial difficulties, social isolation, and loneliness. Women who have been confined to being "someone's wife" quickly lose their self-identity after their husband's death. Traditional male-oriented society has facilitated these feelings by obligating women to self-identify through their fathers, husbands, or sons. As a result, widowed women often turn to their sons for self-identification. Their sons frequently lack the ability to satisfy their mothers and feel unduly burdened by the responsibility. Inevitably, conflict arises between mothers and sons.

Gender differences concerning marital status are similarly striking. In Korea, single women outnumber single men. According to a report of the Economic Planning Board (1983), 79.9% of elderly men are married, while the corresponding figure for women is considerably lower at 24.3%. The wide gap is due to women having longer life expectancies than men, women marrying at a younger age than men, and men remarrying at a higher rate than women. According to a study on the "intent to remarry", 31.7% of the respondents reported they wished to remarry and 68% said they did not want to remarry. By sex, 61.8% of the male respondents answered they wanted to remarry, while 22.7% of the women responded similarly.

Of this population, 38.5% of the men and 15.5% of the women desired remarriage "to stop the loneliness." Men, at a rate of 15% said they wanted to remarry to be cared for by their new wives, while 32.1% of the women responded they would not take the responsibility through remarriage. These figures suggest that elderly women continue to live under psychological and social obligations and the traditional concept of marriage.

4. Work and Leisure

In Korea, only a small number of the elderly have financial independence. Most are supported by family members. According to a Yoon study (1983), 78.2% of Korea's senior citizens depend on their children financially. The remaining 21.8% work or live off of their property income. Those who are ill are cared for by family members— daughter-in-law, wife, husband and daughter. Most (80%) senior citizens do not work. Most senior citizens in Korea tend to the homes and care for their grandchildren. Old women in particular, help with the housework.

According to a Gallup survey on the elderly's leisure activities, 32.5% of elderly men attend social gatherings, usually held at parks or attend schools for the elderly, 16.3% visit their children or friends, and 2.5% go to church. In contrast, elderly women tend to the house (39.4%), take care of their grandchildren (24.9%), and help with the housework (14.5%). In sum,

79.4% of elderly women do "women's work" at home.

IV. Issues of Gender Role: Tradition and Changes

Traditional gender roles as characterized by Confucianist principles continue to lose significance as more women receive higher education and begin careers. Koreans remain confused by the transition from traditional role divisions between sexes and new role divisions in modern society.

Further, revolutionary changes concerning gender roles can be predicted with Korea's rapid industrialization and thus, modernization. Housewives will be able to spend less time with household chores as a result of the recent wide availability of electric appliances and of the current trend for smaller families. As more families have fewer children, the hours devoted to childrearing will be shortened. Thus, smaller Korean families can expect higher standards of living and longer life-spans.

In many respects, Korean society has begun to accept women in its social and economic milieus. That women continue to experience certain restrictions, however, indicates the maintenance of emphasis on traditional role divisions. These deep-seeded differences can best be viewed in the context of gender roles in the home. While women, who remain confined to the home, lose power, men become

empowered as a result of this confinement.

As such, Korean women are confused about their own understanding of gender roles. They anguish between what they learn through education and what, in reality, is imposed by society. Men, for their part, share in the confusion— torn between the traditional, conservative position and the new concepts of gender division. Underlying these contrasts, the fundamental theme remains: gender division, coupled with psychological traits, i.e., self-esteem, has greatly influenced individuals to reassess their own social roles.

Rational gender roles bring forth rational and efficient social progress. With this in mind, the confusion Koreans experience today can be interpreted as an inevitable transition in the process of moving toward gender equality. Although such changes take place slowly, efforts to realize these great changes pave the road to ultimate success.

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요 약

김 태 련

이화여자대학교 교육심리학과

한국인의 성역할 개념을 전통적인 성역할개념과 현대사회에 맞게 받아들여야만 할 새로운 성역할에 대한 개념의 차이에서 혼란을 겪고 있다. 여성들에게 주어진 교육의 기회, 취업의 기회, 법적 지위 향상 그리고 생활환경의 변화가 여성의식을 변화시키고 있지만 장구한 세월의 유교사상은 아직도 매우 뚜렷하게 구별된 성역할을 규정하고 있다. 첫째 남자는 우월하고 여자는 열등하다는 관념에서 여자는 남자에게 복종하고, 남자는 여자를 통제 내지 지배해야 한다는 관념이다. 둘째 여자도 경제활동에 참여하기 보다는 가사노동이 주된 임무이며 모든 경제활동과 사회활동은 남자에 의해서 주도 되어야만 한다고 생각이 지배적이다. 셋째 혈통의 계승을 남자에 의해서 이루어진다는 생각이 지배적이어서 가정 내에서의 여성의 지위는 낮고 권리가 약화되는 결과를 가져온다. 따라서 여성은 바람직한 성역할의 지각과 주어진 성역할의 차이에서 오는 불합리에 상당한 혼란을 느끼고 있다. 가장 합리적인 성역할의 의미가 합리적이고 효율적인 사회의 발전을 가져오고 사회 모든 구성원이 평등하다는 의식과 함께 性差를 강조할 것이 아니라 個人差를 인정해야 할 것이다. 본 논문은 한국인의 남여 성역할이 출생에서 노년에 이르기까지 어떤 특징을 가지고 발달하는가 하는 것을 총괄적으로 설명하고 있다.